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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAR ES SALAAM 000212

SIPDIS

NAIROBI FOR FFP BACON  
KAMPALA FOR REFCORD  
GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958:02/01/2015

TAGS: PREF PHUM PGOV TZ

SUBJECT: MINISTER ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL: "BURUNDIAN REFUGEES, GO HOME"

REF: A) DAR ES SALAAM 156

B) DAR ES SALAAM 148  
C) 04 DAR ES SALAAM 2635

Classified by Pol-Econ Officer Jen Peterson for reason  
1.4(b)

¶1. (U) This message contains an action request please  
see paragraph 10.

¶2. (C) Summary: Minister for Home Affairs Omar Mapuri, who is also a dark horse CCM Presidential candidate, campaigned in Western Tanzania Jan 23-25. His public remarks were marked by strong anti-refugee statements, which included blaming refugees for the region's poverty, increases in crime, and environmental degradation. He ended one address to Burundian refugees by advising them to go home now. End Summary.

¶3. (C) This cable is drawn from field notes provided by UNHCR's Dar es Salaam office, articles in a newspaper owned by the ruling CCM party, and discussions with the UNHCR/Tanzania's Deputy Director Fabrizio Hochschild.

¶4. (SBU) On January 23, Minister Mapuri made measured remarks to Burundian refugees at Kanebwa camp in Kibondo district. He said this was his first visit to a refugee camp in this district and that refugees were welcome. He highlighted Tanzania's efforts in peace talks between the political parties in Burundi. He said refugees should consider going back voluntarily, even though the peace process is going slowly, so that they can be involved in building peace and can participate in the Burundian national elections. He added that when the situation in Burundi reached a stage whereby refugees have no reason not to return, then the GOT will change Burundians' status from refugees to illegal immigrants. He said the Tanzanian authorities do not want to reach that stage. He ended by re-affirming the GOT's commitment to hosting the refugees until time the refugees can return in safety and dignity. In a dinner with the UNHCR head of sub-office, Minister Mapuri said that he did not expect refugees repatriations to rise significantly, but that the government was impatient for them to return.

¶5. (SBU) The next day when he addressed refugees briefly in Mtabila, during heavy rains, his remarks were considerably more anti-refugee. His concluding words were "Tanzania, is tired of hosting you, UNHCR, WFP and their partners are tired of looking after you, and the international community is tired of supporting you. You should go home now". The majority of his speech was inaudible because of the rains.

¶6. (C) At a Jan 25 political rally in Kigoma town, where he addressed 200-250 people, Minister Mapuri's remarks were also stridently anti-refugee. He began by denouncing opposition parties [Note: The ruling party, CCM, lost Kigoma region to the largest opposition party, the CUF, in the 2000 presidential elections because of the CUF's electoral alliance with the opposition CHADEMA. End Note]. He then blamed refugees and illegal immigrants for various problems. He said, "Tanzanians have to share our meager resources with them, which is why Kigoma is poor and developing". He reiterated the standard CCM party line that now is the time for Burundian refugees to return so they can participate in peace building efforts.

¶7. (SBU) At the political rally, Mapuri also discussed Burundian "old caseload" refugees of 1972. Minister Mapuri said Ministry of Home Affairs was swamped with wrongful claims of citizenship from Burundians. He noted that Tanzanian law only permits citizenship for people who have at least one Tanzanian parent; furthermore, Tanzanian citizenship must be invoked at age 18. He said there was no distinction between Burundian refugees who remained in the country on a long-term basis and more recent arrivals; both groups must return to Burundi. He ended by decrying the presence of illegal immigrants, noting they would be subject to deportation proceedings, and requested citizens to cooperate with relevant authorities in enforcing the

law. He congratulated Congolese refugees for returning spontaneously without UNHCR assistance, contrasting Congolese repatriation with the disappointingly slow pace of the UNHCR-organized Burundian repatriation.

**¶18.** (U) On January 26, the CCM-owned newspaper Uhuru carried an editorial titled "It's High Time Burundian Refugees Returned Home" [See reftel C] covering Minister Mapuri's visit. The editorial blamed refugees for crime and environmental degradations. The editorial ended by noting that Mapuri "had given the refugees reasonable notice so they can prepare themselves for their return".

**¶19.** (C) UNHCR Deputy Director Fabrizio Hochschild said it would be useful for foreign Embassies to demarche Minister Mapuri, emphasizing the principle of voluntary return and noting with concern Mapuri's recent remarks. Hochschild thought that forcible repatriation was not a real and present threat. He thought Mapuri's visit marked the politicization of the refugee issue in the run-up to Tanzania's October 2005 general elections. Hochschild also noted that in January 20 GOT/GDRC/UNHCR tri-partite discussions, Mapuri had consistently stressed that returns had to be voluntary. Hochschild also noted that Mapuri's visit coincided with the January 23 deportation of nine Burundian asylum seekers from Kigoma who the UNHCR thought had legitimate claims to refugee status.

**¶110.** (C) Action Request: Post suggests the following talking points for a possible demarche to Minister Mapuri, and would welcome Washington feedback and guidance:

-- Thank you for your government's continued generous hospitality hosting refugees.  
-- We commend Tanzania's role in fostering stability in Burundi through its leadership in the Regional Peace Initiative.  
-- The US is committed to upholding the international community's commitment to provide for refugee needs and to reduce the burden on the host country. We have provided XXX amount of financial support for refugees in Tanzania.  
-- The USG is strongly committed to the principle of voluntary return. We believe the Burundian refugees do want to return home; the question is when. It would be dangerous to regional stability and it could undermine peace progress to force large numbers of refugees to return to Burundi now.  
-- We congratulate Tanzania for upholding the principle of refugee asylum in Great Lakes Summit Communiqui.  
-- Do Minister's Mapuri's remarks urging refugees to go home now, and the "Uhuru" article published January 26, indicate a shift in refugee policy?  
-- We note with concern the recent deportations of refugees and urge continued systematic involvement of UNHCR in the screening of new arrivals.  
-- We commend the Ministry of Home Affairs for working to develop joint screening procedures with the UNHCR.  
-- We look forward to continued dialogue on refugee issues and welcome any suggestions on how USG could work to lessen burden of refugee hosting on Tanzania.

**¶111.** (C) Comment: Minister Mapuri reiterated the CCM standard party line that now is the time for Burundian refugees to return. Mapuri's public address in Kigoma and the Uhuru article, however, added a more ominous threat of forcible repatriation if the Burundian refugees do not voluntarily return. In the run-up to the October 2005 elections, the CCM may campaign against the refugees in order to score political points and make refugees a scapegoat for crime and poverty in Western Tanzania. In the past, Minister Mapuri was relatively uninvolved and fairly balanced on refugee issue. Perhaps in an effort to gain more political credibility and CCM support for his candidacy, he is now playing up to anti-refugee sentiments. We can probably expect more such rhetoric as the national election campaign heats up. End Comment.

OWEN